USEFUL INFORMATION FOR EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS: TEACHERS

(J-1 VISA)

Purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program

The J-1 teacher program promotes the interchange of U.S. and foreign teachers and enhances mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries. Exchange teachers sharpen their professional skills and participate in cross-cultural activities in schools and communities, and they return home after the exchange to share their experiences and increased knowledge of the United States and the U.S. educational system. This exchange enables foreign teachers to understand better U.S. culture, society and teaching practices at the primary and secondary levels, and enhance U.S. students' knowledge of foreign cultures, customs and teaching approaches.

Home Country Physical Presence Requirement

In some cases, J-1 exchange visitors are subject to a "two-year home-country physical presence requirement". Unless this requirement is waived by the US and Home country governments, a J-1 exchange visitor subject to this requirement would be required to complete the requirement by returning to their home country and remaining for 2 years before they could obtain certain statuses in the US. More information on this requirement can be found at: https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange.html.

Teacher Eligibility

Foreign nationals are eligible to participate in exchange visitor programs as full-time teachers if, at the time of initial application to the sponsor, an individual making such application demonstrates to the satisfaction of Rochambeau that they:

Either: (a) Meets the qualifications for teaching at the primary, including primary or secondary levels in schools in their home country; is working as a teacher in their home country at the time of application; and has at least two years of full-time teaching experience,
OR, (b) Is not working as a teacher in their home country at the time of application, but otherwise meets the qualifications for teaching at the primary or secondary levels in schools in the home country; has had at least two years of full-time teaching experience within the past eight years; and, within 12 months of their application submission date for the program, has completed an advanced degree (beyond a degree equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree) in education or in an academic subject matter that they intend to teach or that is directly related to their teaching subject field;

Possesses, at a minimum, a degree equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree in either education or the academic subject field in which they intend to teach;

Satisfies the teaching eligibility standards in Maryland;

Is of good reputation and character;

Agrees to come to the United States temporarily as a full-time teacher of record in an accredited primary or secondary school;

Supply at least three (2) reference letters from colleagues, supervisors and/or principals attesting to that teacher's good reputation, character and teaching skills. One of these letters MUST be from the teacher’s current principal or head of school;

Demonstrate proficiency of the English language;

Confirm financial ability and sufficient funds to cover relocation expenses to the United States and living expenses for at least 2 months after arrival.

Teacher Responsibilities
Exchange Visitor Teachers will be responsible for the following:

- Teach as a full-time, paid faculty member at a primary or secondary school
- Share language, culture, and knowledge with students, colleagues, and the surrounding community
- Assist students with additional academic needs (non-paid tutoring, discussion groups)
- Fulfill professional development requirements
- Complete the annual cross-cultural requirement **by March 1**: A cross-cultural activity is defined as an activity designed to promote exposure and interchange between Exchange Visitors and Americans so as to increase their mutual understanding of each other's society, culture, and institutions. During each academic year, the Exchange Visitor Teacher is required to complete at least one cross-cultural activity from each of the following categories:
    - Each academic year, exchange teachers are required to complete at least one cross-cultural activity from each of the following two categories:

1. In the community: An activity for a local classroom (outside of their host school) or in the community at large designed to give an overview of the history, traditions, heritage, culture, economy, educational system and/or other attributes of their home country;

AND

2. Internationally: An activity that involves U.S. student dialogue with schools or students in another country, preferably in the exchange teacher's home school, through virtual exchange or other means, in order to supplement the goals of the in-person exchange.

Yearly Report

Teachers are required to comply with this program component and submit a written report to the Lycée in a timely manner when requested. There is no specific format proposed, other than:

(i) The date(s) of each activity;
(ii) The location of each activity;
(iii) The audience for and participants in each activity;
(iv) A general overview of each activity, including the topic; and,
(v) The estimated impact of each activity.

Expenses/Fees/Insurance

Applicants will be responsible for the following costs and expenses:

- Sponsor fee: None.
- Third-party fees: Foreign Credentials Evaluation: Rochambeau will cover the costs of obtaining a foreign credentials evaluation, if needed. Rochambeau does not work with any additional third parties or recruitment agencies.
- Visa fees: Rochambeau will reimburse the initial visa fees, including consulate appointments (currently $185), for J-1 participants up to 400EU upon submission of receipts or other satisfactory documentation. If additional visa fees are required, those will be the responsibility of the individual. Please see Visa Fees.
- Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) fee: $220 – Rochambeau will reimburse
- Travel expenses to the United States: Up to $900 for hired teacher reimbursed by the School
- Insurance costs: All J-1 participates must meet the insurance requirements listed below from day one of the program. Rochambeau offers medical/dental/vision plans as well as short and long-term care insurance, and a 403(b)-retirement plan (See attached Benefits Guide). To the extent that the teacher wishes to use Rochambeau's insurance and it does not go into effect as of the start of the program, a teacher will be required to obtain supplementary insurance to meet the below qualifications and confirm the same prior to entering the U.S.

  Insurance requirements:

  Lycee Rochambeau Inc. requires that all exchange visitors have insurance in effect that covers the exchange visitors for sickness or accidents during the period of time that they participate in the sponsor's exchange visitor program. In addition, Lycee Rochambeau Inc. requires that accompanying spouses and dependents of exchange visitors have insurance for sickness and accidents. All exchange visitors, and any accompanying spouse and dependent(s), also may be subject to the requirements of the Affordable Care Act.

  The period of required coverage is the actual duration of the exchange visitor's participation in the sponsor's exchange visitor program as recorded in SEVIS in the "Program Begin Date," and as applicable, the "Program End Date," "Effective Program End Date," or "Effective Date of Termination" fields. Minimum coverage must provide:
  (1) Medical benefits of at least $100,000 per accident or illness;
  (2) Repatriation of remains in the amount of $25,000;
  (3) Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of exchange visitors to their home country in the amount of $50,000; and
  (4) Deductibles not to exceed $500 per accident or illness.

  Insurance policies secured to fulfill these requirements:
  (1) May require a waiting period for pre-existing conditions that is reasonable as determined by current industry standards;
  (2) May include provisions for co-insurance under the terms of which the exchange visitor may be required to pay up to 25% of the covered benefits per accident or illness; and
  (3) Must not unreasonably exclude coverage for perils inherent to the activities of the exchange program in which the exchange visitor participates.

Any policy, plan, or contract secured to fill the above requirements must, at a minimum, be:

(1) Underwritten by an insurance corporation having an A.M. Best rating of "A−" or above; a McGraw Hill Financial/Standard & Poor's Claims-paying Ability rating of "A−" or above; a Weiss Research, Inc. rating of "B + " or above; a Fitch Ratings, Inc. rating of "A−" or above; a Moody's Investor Services rating of "A3" or above; or such other rating as the Department of State may from time to time specify; or
(2) Backed by the full faith and credit of the government of the exchange visitor's home country; or
(3) Part of a health benefits program offered on a group basis to employees or enrolled students by a designated sponsor; or
(4) Offered through or underwritten by a federally qualified Health Maintenance Organization or eligible Competitive Medical Plan as determined by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Accompanying spouses and dependents are required to be covered by insurance in the amounts set forth above.

Exchange visitors who willfully fail to maintain the insurance coverage set forth above while a participant in an exchange visitor program or who make material misrepresentations to the sponsor concerning such coverage will be deemed to be in violation of these regulations and will be subject to termination as an exchange visitor.

Lycee Rochambeau Inc. must terminate an exchange visitor's participation in their program if it determines that the exchange visitor or any accompanying spouse or dependent willfully fails to remain in compliance with this section.

Below, please find a monthly budget illustration of a single teacher living in the area: Cost of Living in Bethesda, MD (NUMBEO):

- Rent: $1,800 and up for a studio, cheaper housing can be found in Silver Spring, Rockville, Gaithersburg
- Transportation: At least $150 for a monthly Metro allowing travel on buses and subway
- Rental insurance: $50 and up, depending on coverage. Full replacement coverage is recommended
- Utilities: $150 and up (heating, electricity, gas, air conditioning)
- Internet: $50 and up depending on services requested
- Cable: $50 and up. Bundling internet, phone and cable is cheaper.
- Cellphone: $50 and up depending on services requested
- Groceries: $250 and up.
- Travel and Entertainment: Varies based on your needs and budget
- Laundry: $10 and up per week
- Clothing: About the same cost as in France, wait for discounts. Warm clothing needed for winter time in the DC, Maryland and Virginia region

Expected work-related deductions, such as tax deductions: U.S. FICA (Social Security and Medicare):

- Teachers with a J-1 VISA are exempt from FICA the first two calendar years in the US. All subsequent calendar years are subject to tax. [Example – if you begin work in August 2019, you are exempt for 4 months in 2019, which is the first calendar year and the year 2020, the second calendar year. Taxes are withheld beginning January 1, 2021, the 3rd calendar year.]

- Students with an F-1 VISA are exempt from FICA the first five calendar years in the US. All subsequent calendar years in the US are subject to tax.

U.S. Federal Income tax:

- Teachers/students with a J-1 or F-1 VISA from France are exempt from Federal Income Tax the first two years (2X365 days) in the U.S. [Example – if you begin work on August 20, 2026, you are exempt from Federal Income tax from August 20, 2026 to August 19, 2028.]

- Teachers/students with a J-1 or F-1 VISA from the U.K. may be exempt from Federal Income Tax the first two years (2X365 days) in the U.S, if they leave the U.S. before the 2-year term. If they plan to stay longer than two years, then it is best to withhold the taxes. If they stay even one day longer in the U.S., then the tax is due retroactive back to the first day of work. [Example – if you begin work on August 20, 2026, you are exempt from Federal Income tax from August 20, 2026 to August 18, 2028, if you stay until August 19th, 2028 or later, the full amount of tax is due, beginning August 20, 2026. Include the number of days in a leap year.]

Tax Treaty:

Nonresident aliens (NRA) from a country with which the United States has an income tax treaty may possibly claim a reduced or zero withholding rate. In order to claim treaty benefits, the NRA must provide information that certifies their eligibility to do so. The required information is provided on Form W-8BEN and Form 8233 (attached), to be completed and returned to Payroll.

Estimates or ranges for all other fees charged for and significant general costs related to participation in the teacher exchange program:

- J-2 spouses and dependents are not authorized to work until they have applied for and received an Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Fragomen Immigration is able to assist you with this filing for the EAD application if you would like. The legal fees are $500 and the incidental fees are $50. The filing fee is subject to change but is currently $470.
- Teachers should expect to need approximately $1,000 USD per family member after they arrive in the U.S. for living expenses prior to receiving their first paycheck.

J-1 APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Obtaining a Visa

Qualified applicants that are recommended for hire will be issued a Form DS-2019. The form will be transmitted via secure email. Once an applicant receives the form, an interview at the U.S. Consulate or Embassy of residence/citizenship should be scheduled. Applicants must pay the SEVIS fee prior to their visa interview. It is preferred an applicant makes an appointment in their country of citizenship. Please schedule an interview as soon as possible to ensure you receive your visa in a timely manner and can plan for the temporary move to America.

Visa issuance decisions are made by consular or immigration officers at the U.S. Consulate or Embassy. An applicant who receives an offer for employment and Form DS-2019 cannot be guaranteed that a visa will be granted. Applicants should not book flights nor make plans to move to the United States until passing a visa interview and receiving a J-1 visa in their passport.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO OBTAIN A J-1 VISA?
Wait times for visa interviews and processing varies depending on the country of application and upon the circumstances of the applicant. Please visit www.travel.state.gov to find out about visa wait times in your country. Please apply as soon as possible. It is important to remember that Exchange Visitor Teachers beginning a new program may not enter the United States more than 30 days before the program start date found on form DS-2019.

J-2 Dependents (Spouse/Children)
A dependent must be a spouse or child of the Exchange Visitor Teacher. The age limit for children dependents is 21. Applicants wishing to bring a dependent will be required to submit an English translation of a marriage license or birth certificate.

Exchange Visitor Teachers can come to the United States to begin their program without dependents. Dependents are able to arrive in the United States at a later date.

FAQ's
How long will I be eligible to teach on a J-1 visa?

The School issues form DS-2019 for up to three years. Exchange teachers will be issued a contract for the dates of their exchange program. Exchange Visitor Teachers are typically approved for a three-year exchange program, and J-1 regulations allow the school to employ the teachers for up to three years initially.

Can I extend my program?

Exchange Visitor Teachers are eligible to apply for an extension of one or two years, but not by a semester or by other fractions of academic years. A teacher should inform the School of the desire for an extension, and Fragomen Worldwide will apply for an extension on behalf of the School. Applications for extensions should be made no later than four months prior to the beginning of the desired extension period. Extensions must be approved by the Department of State.

I received my visa. When can I arrive in the United States?

Exchange Visitors are permitted entry into the United States no more than 30 days before the start date on form DS-2019.

What do I need to do after I enter the US?

The J-1 Sponsor and host school will be in contact with you regularly around your arrival date to coordinate your first few days in the US and your J-1 teacher program orientation. Upon entry into the United States, please provide copies of each visitor's visa, DS-2019, admission stamp, and printed I-94 record. In order to activate your status in the government database, SEVIS, we will also need your U.S. residential address and phone number. You will only be able to apply for benefits such as a social security card and driver's license after your status has been activated in SEVIS.

Does the School offer J-1 visa sponsorship for categories other than teacher?

Rochambeau has been designated by the U.S. Department of State to sponsor teachers. We are not authorized to sponsor any other J-1 visa category.

Can Rochambeau sponsor me to work at any other school in the United States?

Lycee Rochambeau Inc. can only sponsor Exchange Visitor Teachers to work at Rochambeau, The French International School of Washington, DC. We are unable to sponsor teachers to work at any other schools in the United States.

Will Rochambeau help me change my status in the United States?

Rochambeau cannot help applicants change their status. The J-1 program is a temporary exchange and exchange visitors should intent to leave the US at the completion of their exchange program. If circumstances change and an exchange visitor in the US wishes to change status, it is recommended that applicants who are in the United States and are eligible to change their status contact an immigration attorney to inquire about a change of status.

Can an Exchange Visitor Teacher work a second job?

Exchange Visitor Teachers are only authorized to perform the work described on their Form DS-2019. Teachers are ineligible to perform any other work for pay and cannot legally earn a wage at any other organization.

How long can I stay in the United States once my program has finished?

After you have successfully completed your program, you are permitted by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to remain in the U.S. for up to 30 days. During this 30-day period, which is often referred to as the "Grace Period," you are under the jurisdiction of the USCIS and are no longer entitled to teach at Lycee Rochambeau. USCIS grants this period to allow time to prepare for your return to your home country. You may travel inside the United States during this time, but you may not travel abroad and then re-enter in J-1 status during your grace period.

Exchange Visitor Program Hotline
To help safeguard the health, safety and welfare of all exchange visitors, there is an Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) Emergency Hotline – 1-866-283-9090 – a 24/7 toll-free telephone number that allows exchange visitors to directly contact the Department of State in emergency and urgent situations. A Department representative is available 24 hours a day.

Please see the Welcome Guide for additional information.